

Talking Points
Assistant Minority Leader Harry Reid
United States Senate Commerce Committee
NCAA Gambling Ban Hearing
March 29, 2000

- \$ First, let me stipulate, that I am opposed to illegal gambling on college sports.
- \$ While I appear before this committee today as a Senator I want this Committee to understand that my testimony is based, in part, upon my experience as the former Chairman of the Nevada Gaming Commission.
- \$ Gaming is a cash industry that absent meaningful regulation invites mischief.
- \$ Indeed, it works in Nevada because of the effective meaningful regulatory framework that oversees this industry.
- \$ I believe the proposal before this committee today misses the mark in several key respects.
- \$ Illegal gambling, whether in the dorm rooms of our colleges our the saloons and taverns throughout the country, is wrong and more should be done to crack down on it.
- \$ However, banning lawfully regulated college gambling in Nevada -- which represents 1 percent of gambling on college sports -- will not address the problem of illegal gambling.
- \$ Where is the evidence that banning the 1 percent of legal college wagering in Nevada will eliminate illegal gambling on colleges?
- \$ Where is the evidence that current laws are insufficient.
- \$ I would suggest such evidence does not exist.
- \$ We do not need new laws **B** we need better enforcement.
- \$ I=ve proposed legislation directing the Department of Justice to appoint a special task force to study and report to Congress on the measures that could be taken to curb illegal gambling.
- \$ I appreciate the NCAA=s interest in protecting the integrity of college sports.
- \$ But the NCAA=s efforts to define this issue as arising out of Nevada and afflicting college campuses is simply a red herring.

- \$ Walk into any local bar or tavern and you're likely to find an illegal bookie.
- \$ Walk into any office today and you're likely to find a pool on the final four.
- \$ Will this ban eliminate this?
- \$ Are we going to start referring March Madness office pools down to the Justice Department for prosecution?
- \$ Of course not and the NCAA should abandon the use of this red herring..
- \$ I believe they are in a position to actually do something to clean up the beleaguered reputation of college sports right now.
- \$ They are reaping millions of dollars in revenues from contracts they're signing with broadcasters to cover these games.
- \$ Perhaps they could be using some of that money to mount educational campaigns not unlike those being done to combat drug and alcohol abuse on our campuses.
- \$ I believe we need to follow the money a little more.
- \$ What is being done with all of this money?
- \$ I believe the NCAA has an obligation to put its money where its mouth is and do something to curb this problem on their member campuses.
- \$ The fault lies not in Nevada and the solution is not a ban.
- \$ I believe the solution involves a better understanding of the illegal gambling, meaningful enforcement of existing laws and greater cooperation from the NCAA.
- \$ That said, I also believe these bans neglect to recognize the good work done by Nevada resorts to work with law enforcement in preventing point shaving scandals on college campuses.
- \$ They realize it is in their best financial interests not to have any scandals.
- \$ That is why they go to such great lengths to provide a safe regulated environment for the operation of their sports books.
- \$ Finally, I wish to say a few words about states rights.

- \$ Since 1994, Nevada, more than any other state in the union, has been targeted for federal initiatives that are anathema to the people of Nevada.
- \$ Whether it's nuclear waste or morality based anti gambling initiatives -- the Republican Congress has sought to subvert and trash the 10th Amendment rights of the state of Nevada.
- \$ It is at best ironic that the party which professes to care most about states rights is again pushing legislation which is clearly so violative of those rights.